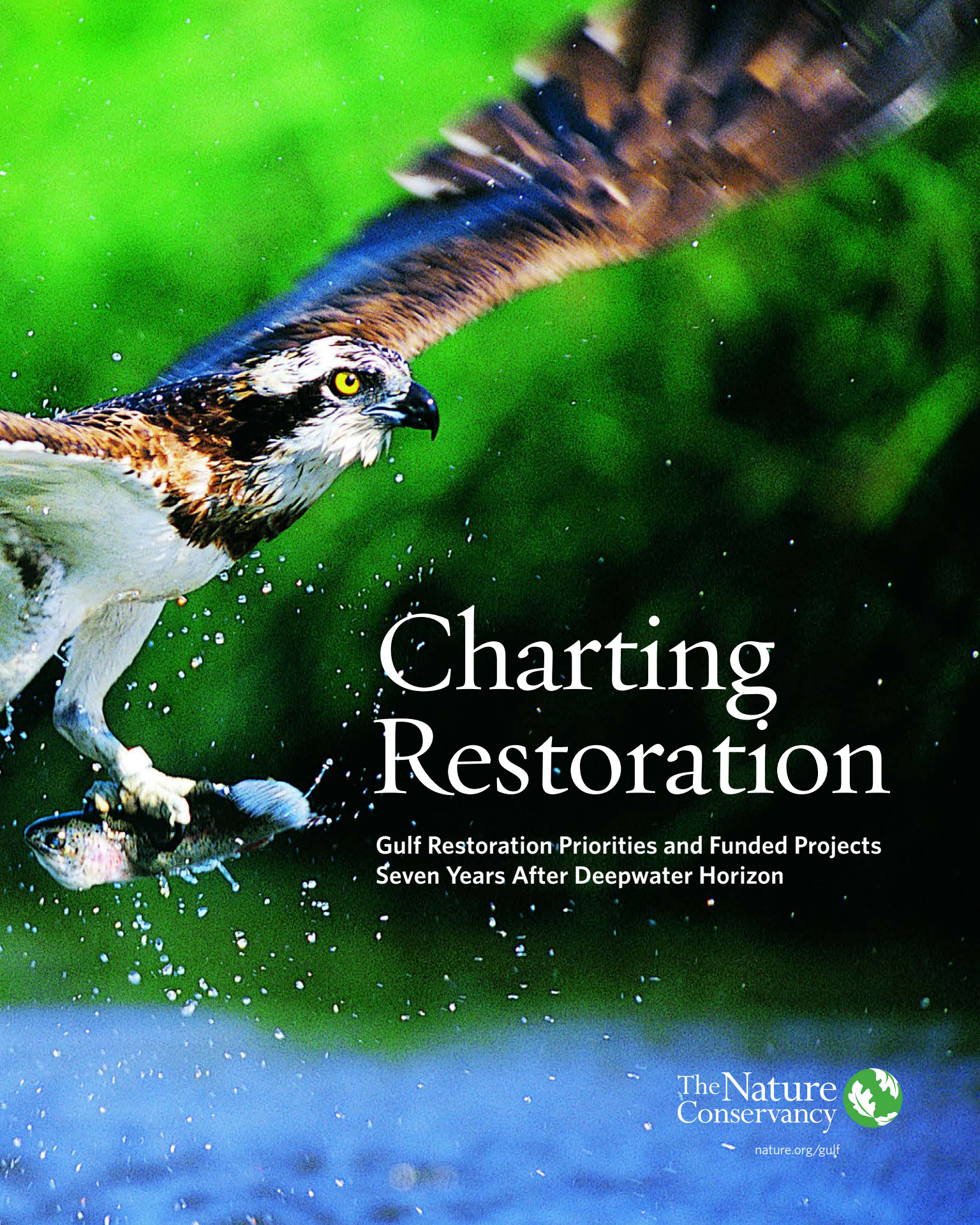

Charting Restoration

Gulf Restoration Priorities and Funded Projects Seven Years After Deepwater Horizon

The Nature Conservancy

nature.org/gulf

Shepard C, James J, Fedorko E, and R Bendick. *Charting Restoration: Gulf Restoration Priorities and Funded Projects Seven Years After Deepwater Horizon*. Washington DC: The Nature Conservancy. December 2017. 32 pages.

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Introduction

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill focused the attention of the Gulf states and the nation on the ongoing problems in the Gulf of Mexico. There is now a broader understanding of the Gulf's remarkable environmental assets, the social and economic values of those assets, and the many threats to the Gulf's future. As local, state, and federal agencies plan for the expenditure of BP-related funds and make additional proposals to the RESTORE Council, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Trustee Implementation Groups, it is important that existing plans—backed by science, public input, and research--inform the decision-making. Particularly useful will be drawing on existing plans in the coordination work funded by the RESTORE Council in its recent Funded Priority List for planning activities.

During the seven years since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, multiple federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and coalitions have developed additional plans and visions for restoring and conserving the Gulf of Mexico and lands along its coastline. These visions and plans range in geographic scope, scale, and detail depending on the entity that has put them forth. Many of the plans identify strategic land conservation, coastal protection, and ecological restoration activities at specific locations across the Gulf.

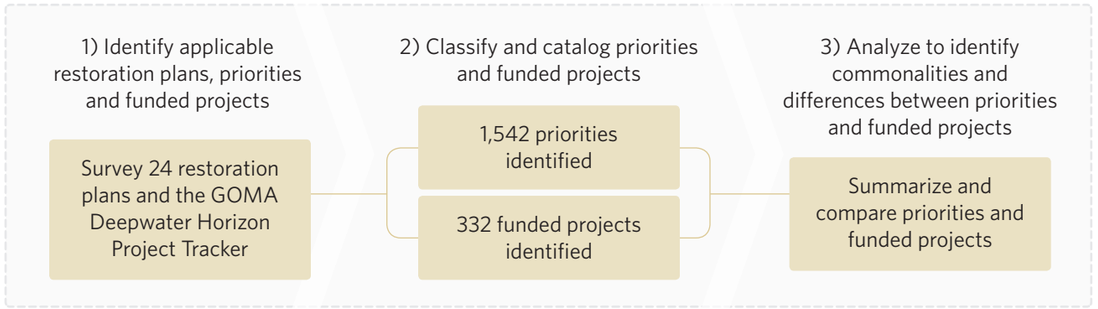
Achieving a comprehensive understanding of these existing priorities is important to guiding the Gulf restoration process. With this in mind, this report analyzes and synthesizes existing plans to identify common priorities and to demonstrate how priorities differ from state to state; in addition, where possible, this document identifies the location of priority actions. This report identifies the 332 Gulf projects that have received oil spill funding to date. Those projects are then compared with the restoration and conservation priorities contained in the plans.

Taken together, these datasets show where priorities are being funded as well as where differences between funding and priorities exist.

The RESTORE process and the NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund and Natural Resource Damage funding decisions are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to accelerate Gulf of Mexico restoration. Existing state, federal, nonprofit, and community plans and visions can and should be practical guides for Gulf restoration. This is the second update of this analysis which we believe can continue to be updated over time to help guide future restoration investment decisions. While The Nature Conservancy is not suggesting that expenditures from Deepwater Horizon–related sources mirror cumulative plan priorities and while we realize that this picture of funded projects will continue to change as restoration money becomes available, taking these plans into account will help the RESTORE Act and other Deepwater Horizon- related funding sources fulfill their promise of becoming a powerful tool for creating a better future for the Gulf of Mexico.

Our Approach

The first version of Charting Restoration was released in April 2015 by The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Gulf of Mexico Program and Downstream Strategies, a consulting firm hired to assist TNC in this effort. This update, also led by TNC and Downstream Strategies, includes information from the GOMA Deepwater Horizon Project Tracker to facilitate evaluation of funded projects. The assessment followed three steps:



Identifying Gulf Priorities and Funded Projects

The restoration- and conservation-related plans we used to identify priorities included:

- Federal agency regional restoration plans;
- Regional NGO restoration plans (e.g., TNC, National Wildlife Federation, Ocean Conservancy, Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation);
- Quasi-government regional plans;
- State Comprehensive Coastal Management Plans; and
- National Estuary Program (NEP) plans.

To be included in the assessment of priorities, plans needed to either cover the entire Gulf region or be specific to coastal restoration in one or more of the five Gulf states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The finest scale considered for this assessment was that of the National Estuary Program plans. County-level restoration plans were not considered for this study due to the limited existence and availability of those plans. Unique priorities were identified in each plan, extracted to a database, and classified using a standardized classification scheme. When priorities contained location information, the priorities were mapped. Because priorities were available at varying scales,spatial information was not available for all priorities. "Funded projects" refers to those projects that have been approved to receive funding, or have received funding, from five distinct programs since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill through October 2017. The five distinct programs are the following:

- RESTORE Act Buckets 1-3
- Natural Resources Damages Assessment
  - Phase I
  - Phase II
  - Phase III
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
  - Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund
- MOEX Supplemental Environmental Projects
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act

The funded projects were identified through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's Deepwater Horizon Project Tracker (http://www.dwhprojecttracker.org/). This database allows tracking of projects that have been approved to date in response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Each funded project was extracted to a database and classified using the same standardized classification scheme that we applied to the identified priorities. Where spatial information was available, the funded projects were also mapped.

Categorizing Priorities and Funded Projects

We developed four orders of attribution for cataloging project activities and priorities in order to systematically analyze common project types, goals, actions, and habitats across priorities and funded projects. The classification involved the following four attributes: 1) type of the priority or project, 2) goal of the priority or project, 3) main action or activity associated with the priority or project, and 4) the target habitat, where applicable.

1) Type of priority or project › 2) Goal › 3) Action or activity › 4) Habitat

Classifications and definitions for priority and project ***types***.

Type of priority or project	Definition
Built	Built capital includes built infrastructures and their products. "Built" projects and involve infrastructure work such as building or repairing roads, buildings, bridges, docks, and marinas.
Human and social	Human capital includes the health, knowledge, and all other attributes of individual humans, including financial capital, that allow them to function in a complex society. Social capital includes all the formal and informal networks among people—family, friends, and neighbors—as well as social institutions at all levels, such as churches; social clubs; local, state, and national governments; NGOs; and international organizations. "Human and social" projects and priorities include efforts such as environmental education, public health initiatives, community outreach, and economic development.
Natural	Natural capital includes the world's ecosystems and all the services they provide. "Natural" projects and priorities are focused on enhancing natural systems and include efforts such as stream restoration, habitat creation, and water quality improvement.

Classifications and definitions for priority and project ***goals***.

Type of Goal	Definition
Restore and conserve habitat	This goal pertains to projects and priorities with the primary purpose of restoring and conserving habitat. Within this goal, a major focus is to work with Gulf Coast stakeholders to expedite implementation and improve the effectiveness of state and federal programs related to landscape-scale resource management, habitat conservation, and restoration strategies.
Replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources	Living coastal and marine resources are showing visible signs of distress, such as depleted species populations and degraded habitats. The major focus of this goal is to promote sustainable resource management by conserving and restoring populations and by protecting habitat for targeted species.
Enhance community resilience	This goal focuses on enhancing a community's ability to prevent and respond to natural disasters, human impacts, and climate change. Examples include targeted ecosystem restoration, structural development addressing the underlying and/or root causes of threats , coastal planning programs, and education and outreach efforts.
Restore water quality	This goal focuses on addressing the Gulf of Mexico's numerous water-quality problems, including excess nutrients, altered sediment inputs, pathogens, and mercury and other pollutants. One of the most prevalent signs of such problems in the Gulf of Mexico is hypoxia—low oxygen levels in the water—which can result from excess nutrients in the water and other factors. Within this goal, a major focus is to reduce the amount of nutrients flowing into the Gulf and to undertake other measures to enhance water quality.
Other	An example of 'other' would be economic development projects.

Classifications and definitions for priority and project ***actions***.

Type of Action	Definition
Restoration	Focused on returning natural features or systems to a former or improved condition.
Habitat creation	Focused on the creation of a natural home or environment for an animal, plant, fish, or other organism.
Data collection, monitoring, and assessment	Focused on collection of data to support monitoring of water quality, species health, distribution, etc.
Grow or support aquatic or terrestrial species management	Focused on the life, well-being, population, or study of aquatic or terrestrial organisms. Includes increasing stocks/populations and related management activities.
Land easement or acquisition	Focused on the acquisition or protection of a tract of land.
Analytical tools for planning and science	Focused on the use of a wide range of tools to support decision making and advance scientific understanding (example: GIS, statistical programs, other models).
Create or advance a program	Focused on bringing a new program into existence or advancing a current program.
Planning	Focused on the process of planning for an event, initiative, or policy.
Capital and finance	Focused on money or other assets.
Education	Focused on educating or supporting education.
Hydrologic improvement	Focused on improving the movement and/or distribution of water.
Sediment reduction or water-quality improvement	Focused on actions to reduce sediment and/or improve water quality.
Infrastructure	Focused on the creation or restoration of built structures and facilities.
Other	An example of 'other' would be economic development projects.

It is important to note potential limitations with the techniques used to classify priorities and funded projects. The classification process was intended to capture the main elements of the priorities and funded projects; however, erroneous attribution can be introduced due to the sometimes subjective nature of interpreting priorities and funded projects and reclassifying them into new categories. Classification of priorities and projects required us to select the one category that best captured the overall project. In reality, some projects have multiple goals and as such secondary objectives are not represented in this analysis. In addition, we used the GOMA Deepwater Horizon Project Tracker to identify funded projects, therefore, any projects that are missing from the Project Tracker are not included in our analysis. Quality control of the cataloged database required multiple iterations of review by the authors.

Classifications used for habitat ***type***.

Bank stabilization
Barrier island/headland
Beaches/dunes
Coastal forest/long leaf
Habitat corridors
Living shorelines
Mangroves
Marsh/wetlands
Multiple
Offshore/pelagic
Oyster/coral/scallop
Ridge
Seagrass
Terrestrial
Unknown
N/A

Comparing Priorities and Funded Projects

The priorities identified across plans were compared to funded projects to identify where funding aligns with identified priorities and where there are differences across the Gulf. Priorities and funded projects were compared at three scales—Gulfwide, state, and local—depending on the scale of the individual priorities and funded projects. (Some projects have multiple objectives, but our methodology required that we choose the most significant objective for categorization). Gulfwide and state-specific summaries and maps were produced to show spatial patterns of priorities and funding. Priorities and funded projects that contained spatial information were mapped and aggregated to polygons in order to visualize the relationship between priorities and funding at a more local scale. Precise location information was not available for many priorities; therefore, the maps should be viewed as a relative spatial distribution of priorities and funding across the Gulf, rather than a depiction of the exact location. In some cases, general priorities (e.g., improve water quality) were identified for multiple states or the entire Gulf region but no locations were suggested for implementation. In these instances, we included the priority in the Gulfwide summaries but did not include them in the map analysis because it was impossible to determine the specific locations in which these priorities occurred. All funded projects were assigned a specific geographic location. However, 31% (472 out of 1,542) of priorities were not specific to a particular location and therefore were not included in the map analysis. Overall, the majority of priorities and funded projects contained spatial information, and the analysis provides an informative representation of the spatial distribution of priorities and funding across the Gulf.

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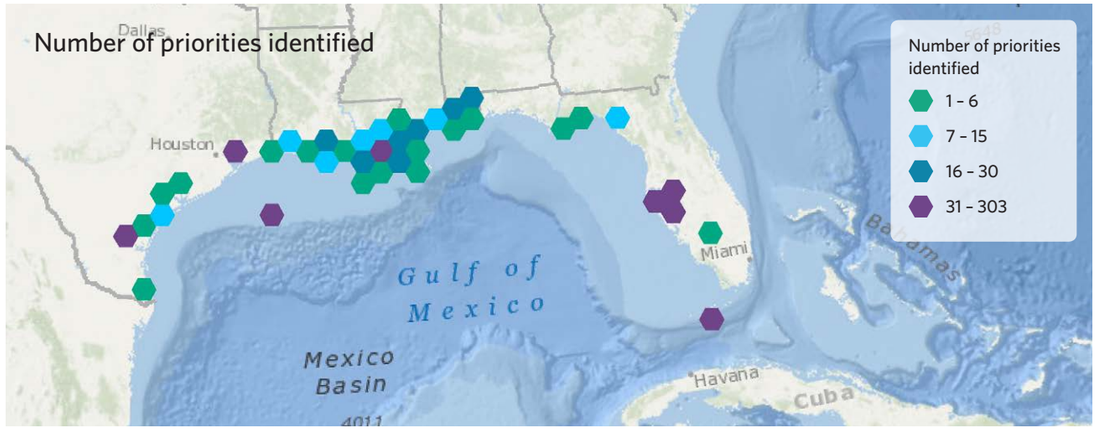
What We Found

Identified Priorities

A total of 1,542 unique priorities were identified across the Gulf Coast within the 21 plans assessed.

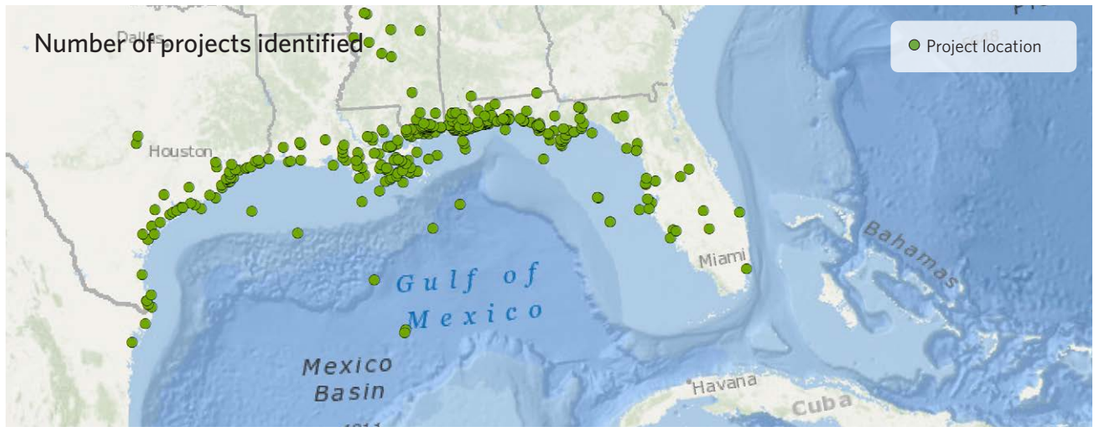
Plan	Author	Number of unique priorities & actions	State(s)
2017 Barataria-Terrebonne Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (Draft)	Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program	57	LA
Coastal Bend Bays Plan	Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program	53	TX
A Roadmap to Resilience: Towards A Healthier Environment, Society, & Economy for Central Alabama	Coastal Recovery Commission of Alabama	28	AL
The Florida Keys National Marine Sancturary Revised Management Plan	Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary	303	FL
Flower Garden Banks Final Management Plan	Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary	61	TX
Charting the Course to 2015: Galveston Bay Strategic Action Plan	Galveston Bay National Estuary Program	52	TX
RESTORE: Comprehensive Plan 2016	Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council	11	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Governors' Action Plan II: For Healthy & Resilient Coasts	Gulf of Mexico Alliance	21	
Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan	Joint Florida Gulf National Estuary Programs	280	FL
Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast	Lousiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority	127	LA
Mississippi Gulf Coast Restoration Plan	Mississippi DEQ and NFWF	30	MS
Mississippi Gulf Coast Restoration Plan 2016 Addendum	Mississippi DEQ and NFWF	7	MS
Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan for Alabama's Estuaries & Coast	Mobile Bay National Estuary Program	16	AL
Restoring the Gulf of Mexico for People and Wildlife: Recommended Projects and Priorities	National Wildlife Federation	42	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
A Land Conservation Vision for the Gulf of Mexico Region: An Overview	Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation	4	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy: Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force	The Environmental Protection Agency	161	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Our Future Gulf	The Nature Conservancy	18	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Restoring the Gulf of Mexico: A Framework for Ecosystem Restoration in the Gulf of Mexico	The Ocean Conservancy	43	TX, LA, AL. FL
Gulf of Mexico Recreational Fisheries: Recommendations for Restoration, Recovery, and Sustainability	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership	79	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Mississippi Coastal Improvements Plan	United States Army Corps of Engineers	13	MS
America's Gulf Coast: A long Term Recovery Plan after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill	United States Coast Guard & Navy	20	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Next Steps for a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed	United States Fish & Wildlife Service	44	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Gulf of Mexico Initiative	USDA-NRCS	67	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL
Gulf of Mexico Restoration: A Private Lands Vision for Success	USDA-NRCS	5	TX, LA, MS, AL, FL

Of the 1542 priorities, 1070 contained sufficient location information to enable mapping:



Funded Gulfwide Projects

Of the 332 funded projects identified, totaling $2.86 billion, all of the projects had sufficient location information to be mapped:

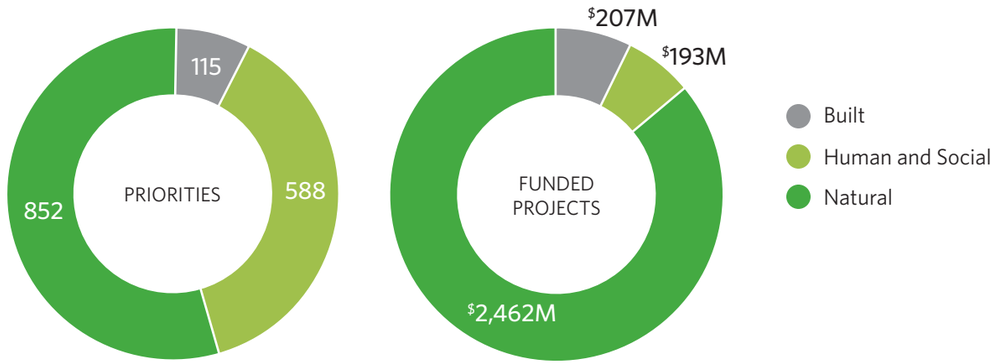


Comparing Gulfwide Priorities With Funded Projects

Priorities and funded projects were compared by type, goal, action, and habitat across the Gulf to identify commonalities, differences, and funding gaps. Pie charts and bar graphs compare *all* of the identified priorities to *all* of the funded projects. The mapped comparisons include only the subset of identified priorities and funded projects that contained location information (the majority were mapped, as noted above).

Type

Priorities and funded projects were categorized as one of three project types: natural, human/social, or built. These project types indicate the primary outcome of the project. Natural projects generally relate to ecosystems, human and social projects relate to people and social networks, and built projects are focused on built infrastructure.



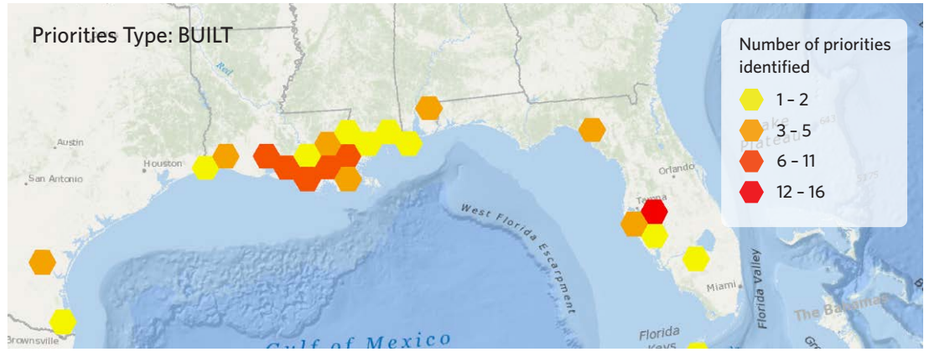
A note on reading the maps on the following pages

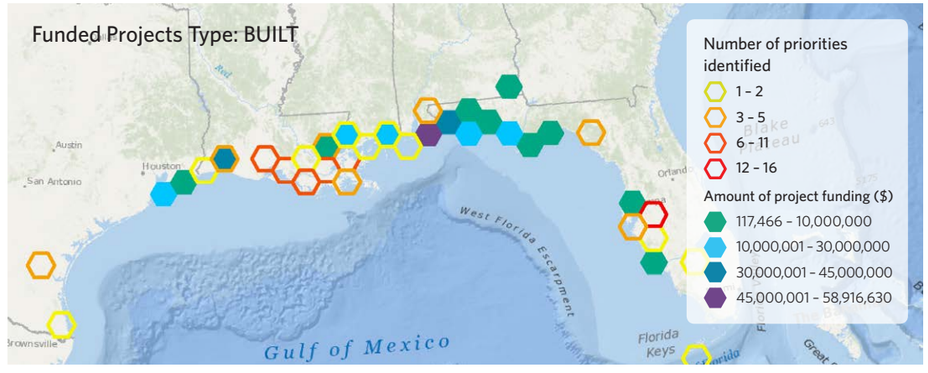
The top map in each panel shows where ***priorities*** are distributed across the Gulf. Areas that have been identified as priorities are shown as shaded hexagons. Areas with more priorities have red hexagons; areas with fewer priorities have yellow hexagons.

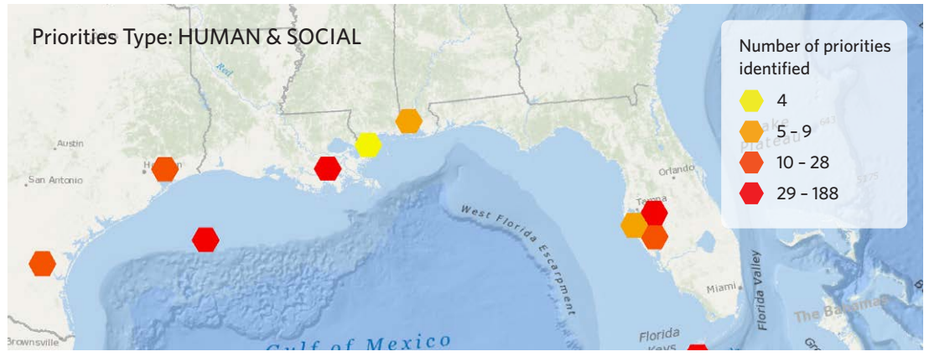
The bottom map in each panel shows where ***funding*** has been distributed across the Gulf in relation to the priorities in the top map. Areas that have received funding to date are shown as shaded hexagons. Areas that have received more funding are shaded blue; areas that have received less are shaded green. The boundaries for each hexagon retain the color from the top map so you can easily identify where areas of priority align with areas of funding.

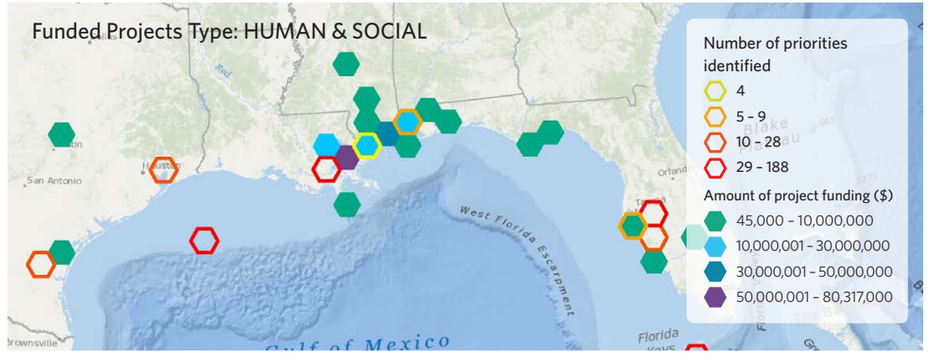
In addition to identifying the degree of restoration priority and amount of project funding along the Gulf Coast, these maps demonstrate the following:

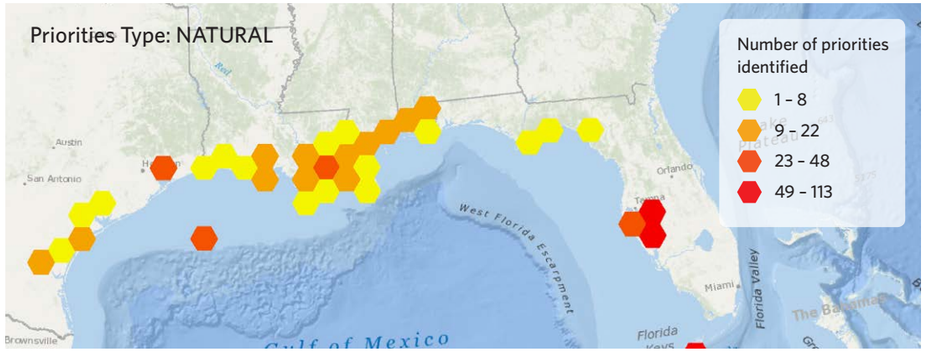
- Geographic areas that have multiple priorities and have received project funding
- Geographic areas that have multiple priorities and have not received project funding
- Geographic areas that have not been identified as priorities but have received project funding

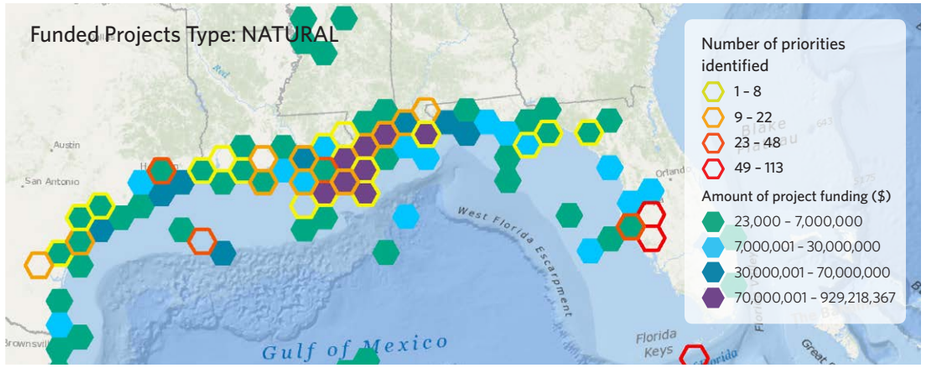






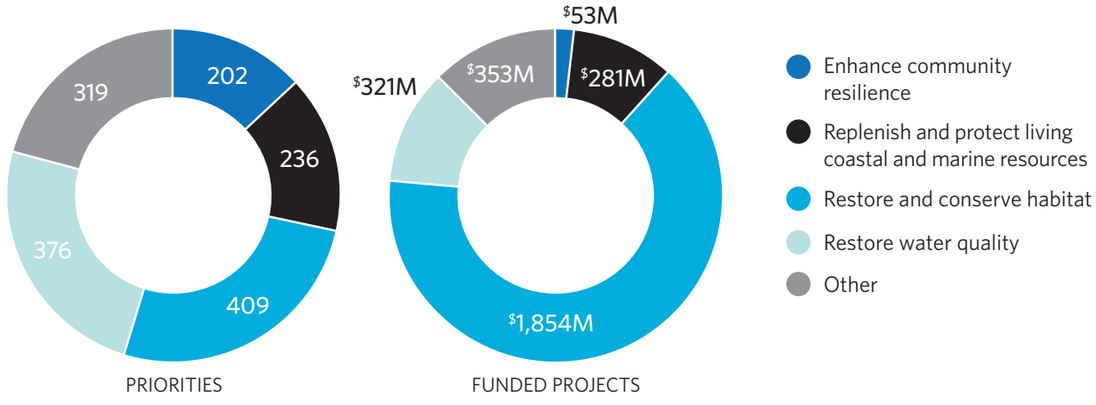


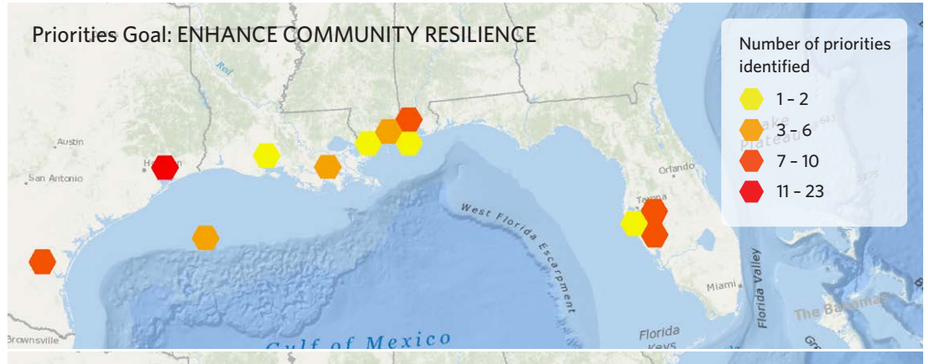


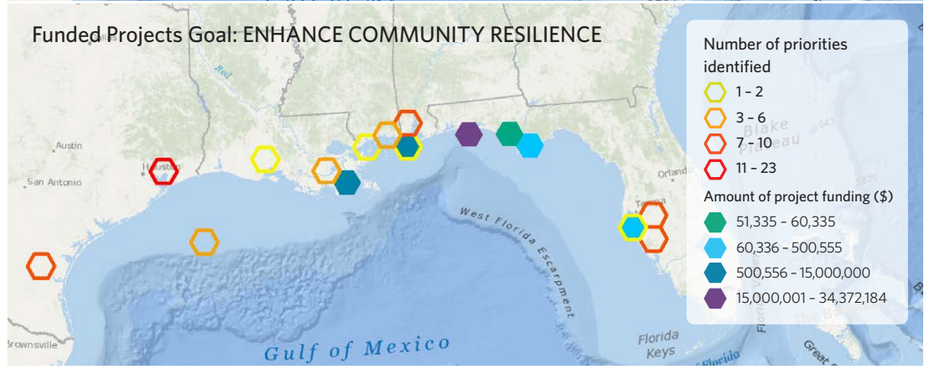


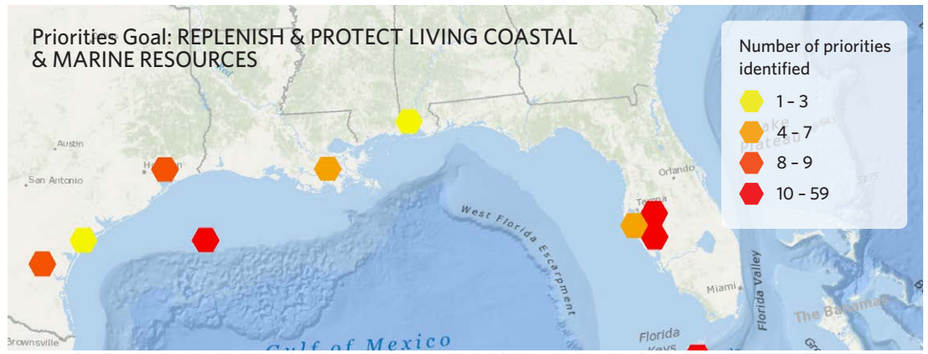
Goals

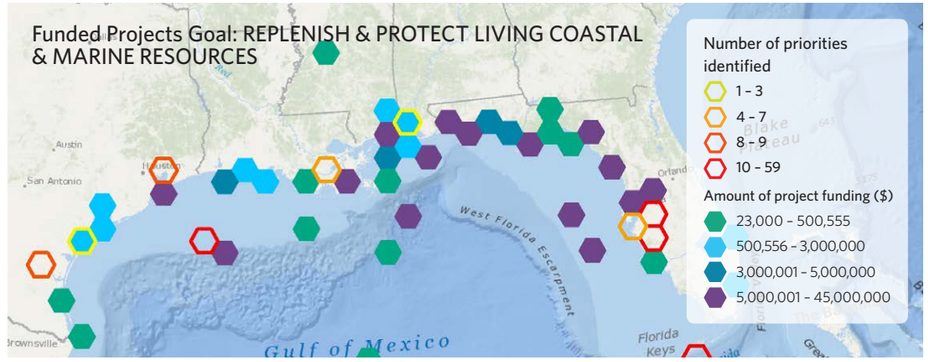
Priorities and funded projects were categorized as one of five project goals: *Enhance community resilience*, *Replenish and protect living marine resources*, *Restore and conserve habitat*, *Restore water quality*, and *Other*. The 'Other' category includes project goals such as economic development and projects in which a clear singular goal could not be identified.

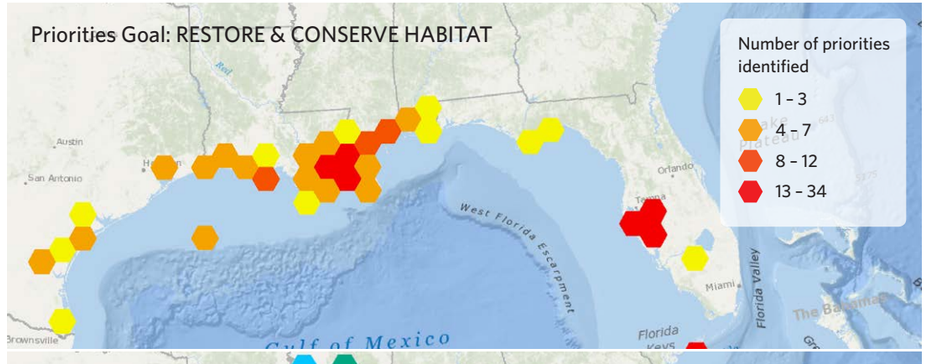


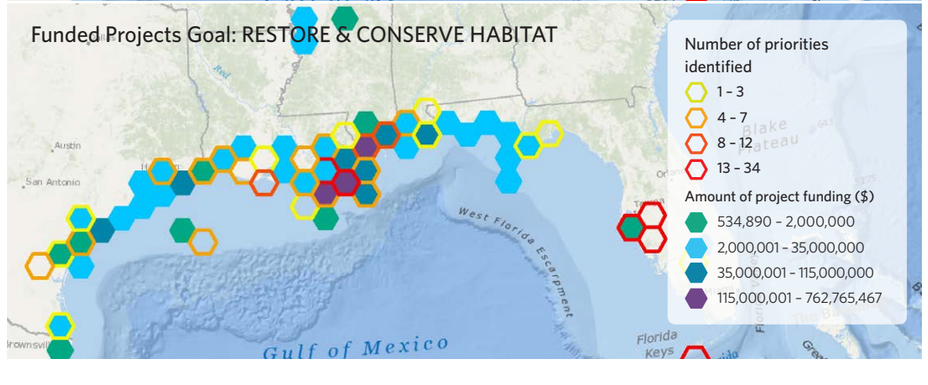

Priorities Goal: ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
Number of priorities identified
1 - 2
3 - 6
7 - 10
11 - 23
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Florida Valley
Austin
San Antonio
Miami
Florida Keys

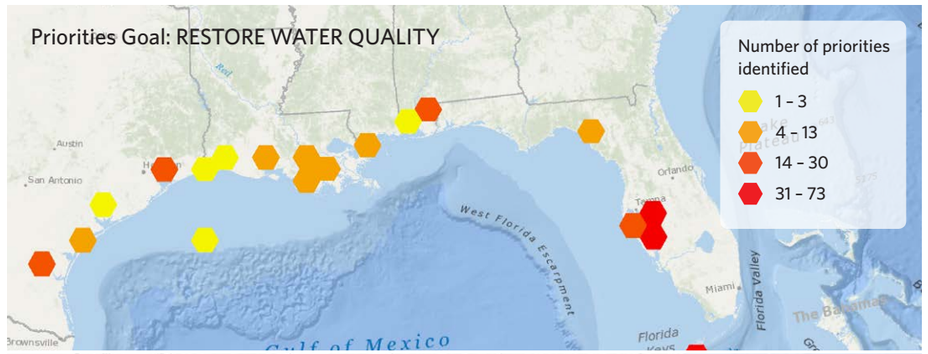

Funded Projects Goal: ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
Number of priorities identified
1 - 2
3 - 6
7 - 10
11 - 23
Amount of project funding ($)
51,335 - 60,335
60,336 - 500,555
500,556 - 15,000,000
15,000,001 - 34,372,184
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Austin
San Antonio
Florida Keys


Priorities Goal: REPLENISH & PROTECT LIVING COASTAL & MARINE RESOURCES
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 7
8 - 9
10 - 59
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Florida Valley
Austin
San Antonio
Miami
Florida Keys


Funded Projects Goal: REPLENISH & PROTECT LIVING COASTAL & MARINE RESOURCES
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 7
8 - 9
10 - 59
Amount of project funding ($)
23,000 - 500,555
500,556 - 3,000,000
3,000,001 - 5,000,000
5,000,001 - 45,000,000
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Austin
San Antonio
Florida Keys


Priorities Goal: RESTORE & CONSERVE HABITAT
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 7
8 - 12
13 - 34
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Florida Valley
Austin
San Antonio
Miami
Florida Keys

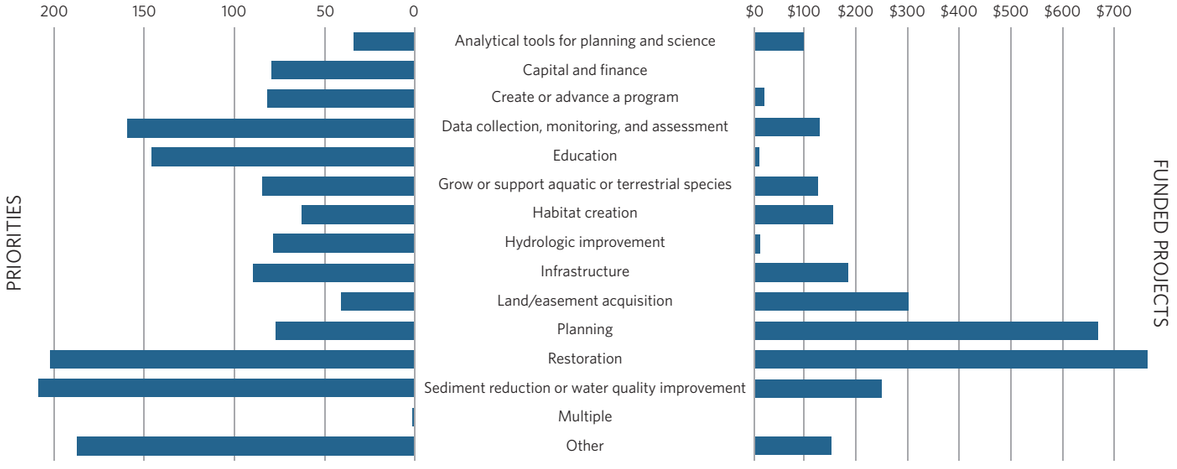

Funded Projects Goal: RESTORE & CONSERVE HABITAT
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 7
8 - 12
13 - 34
Amount of project funding ($)
534,890 - 2,000,000
2,000,001 - 35,000,000
35,000,001 - 115,000,000
115,000,001 - 762,765,467
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Austin
San Antonio
Florida Keys


Priorities Goal: RESTORE WATER QUALITY
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 13
14 - 30
31 - 73
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Florida Valley
Austin
San Antonio
Miami
Florida Keys

Funded Projects Goal: RESTORE WATER QUALITY
Number of priorities identified
1 - 3
4 - 13
14 - 30
31 - 73
Amount of project funding ($)
60,000 - 2,000,000
2,000,001 - 5,000,000
5,000,001 - 10,000,000
10,000,001 - 114,975,068
Gulf of Mexico
West Florida Escarpment
Austin
San Antonio
Florida Keys

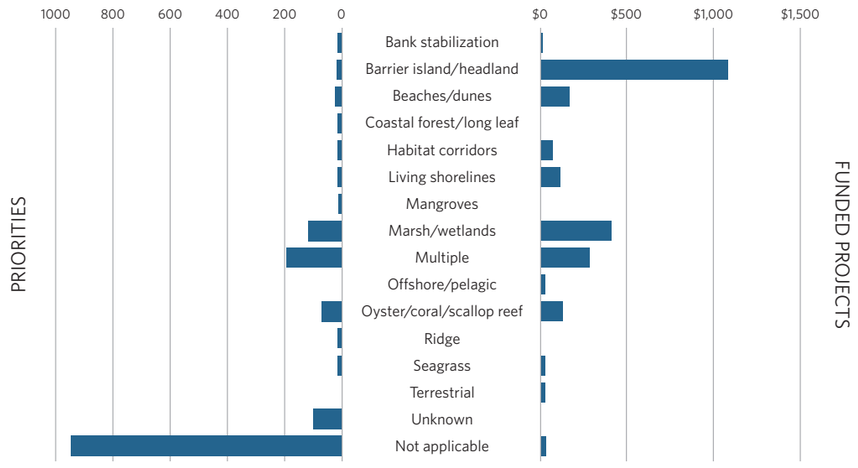
Actions

Priorities and funded projects were categorized by the main action being used to achieve the goal. The left side of the graph indicates the number of times a particular action was identified as a priority. The right side of the graph shows the amount of funding for each action to date.



Habitat Types

We categorized all of the identified priorities and funded projects into one of thirteen classes that describe the habitat of interest, if applicable. The bar graph shows the relative occurrence of target habitat types for priorities and the amount of funded projects for each habitat. Only priorities and funded projects that explicitly listed a habitat type were included. The *not applicable* classification was used for priorities and funded projects that were not related to habitats.



Note: "Multiple" habitats were identified when a specific priority or project addressed more than one habitat.

Overall Gulfwide Findings

Across the Gulf, the majority of funding has gone toward restoring and conserving the natural environment, which shows good overall alignment with the plan priorities that have been identified in this report. There are, however, differences between priorities and funded projects:

Among the types of projects evaluated (Built, Human and Social, Natural), more funding has been allocated to Natural projects than might have been expected given the number of times Human and Social activities were mentioned in plans. We believe this is likely because:

- The initial funding sources (NFWF-GEBF and Early Natural Resource Damages) favor natural resource restoration projects
- There was a backlog of critical natural resource projects ready to go including in the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan
- Project sponsors sought to demonstrate early on-the-ground and visible results
- New planning processes identified additional important natural projects
- Other portions of the Deepwater Horizon settlement were addressing human and social needs
- Projects classified as natural are actually meeting human and social needs such as creating resilience of communities to storms and restoring economic resources such as oyster reefs

With respect to the goals of restoration, the funded projects roughly track priorities with more being spent on Restore and Conserve Habitat and less on Restore Water Quality than might be expected from the plans. We believe this difference is likely explained by, again, the emphasis in the early funding sources on habitat restoration and by the time needed and complexity of designing and developing water quality restoration projects.

The analysis of geographic distribution of projects suggests that it is too early to identify gaps in distribution, but that areas of the Gulf with strong restoration plans like the Mississippi River Delta and National Estuary Program sites received more funding for priorities. Some states and regions are just now beginning to complete more comprehensive Gulf restoration strategies that will direct funds to additional restoration priorities.

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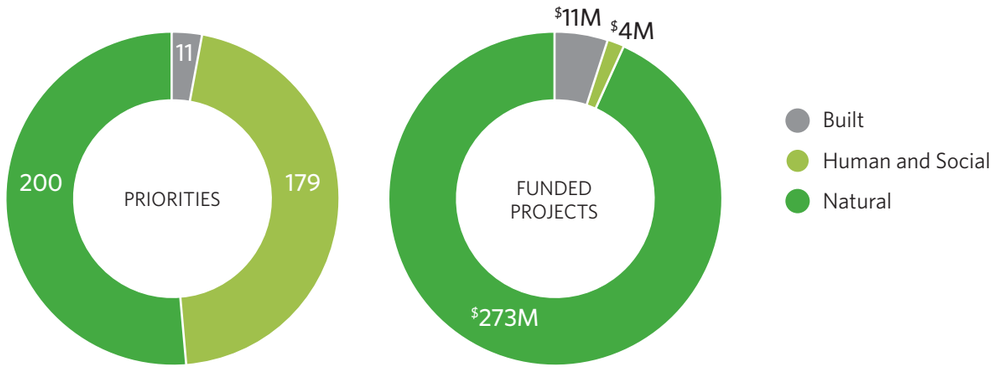
COMPARISON OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES VERSUS ACTUAL SPENDING: TEXAS

- *Enhance Community Resilience* was the most identified goal in the assessed plans and yet was the least funded project goal. However, projects such as coastal land acquisition can have important secondary community resilience benefits.
- The majority of funded projects have a goal of *Restore and Conserve Habitat* or *Replenish and Protect Living Marine Resources*.
- *Sediment Reduction and Water-Quality Improvements* are a top priority activity that remains mostly unfunded most likely because the initial sources of funding are not designed for water quality projects.
- *Land Acquisition* was the top funded activity in Texas.
- To date, Texas has received 10% of Gulf funding.

TYPES



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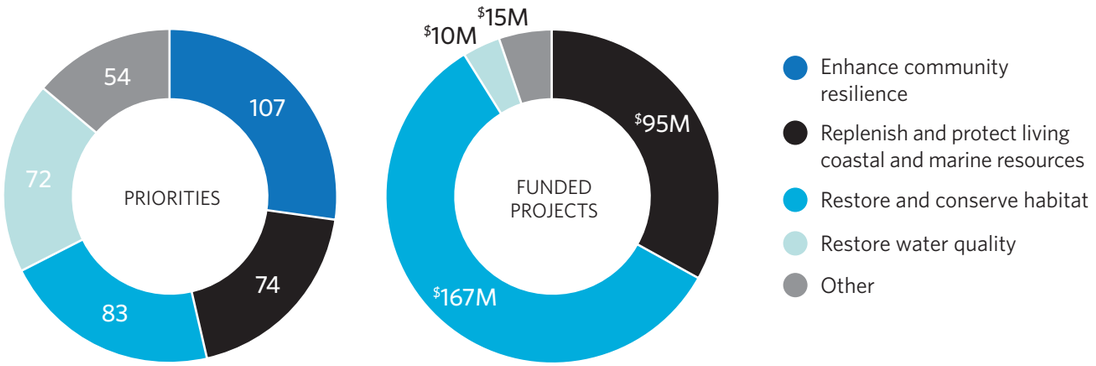

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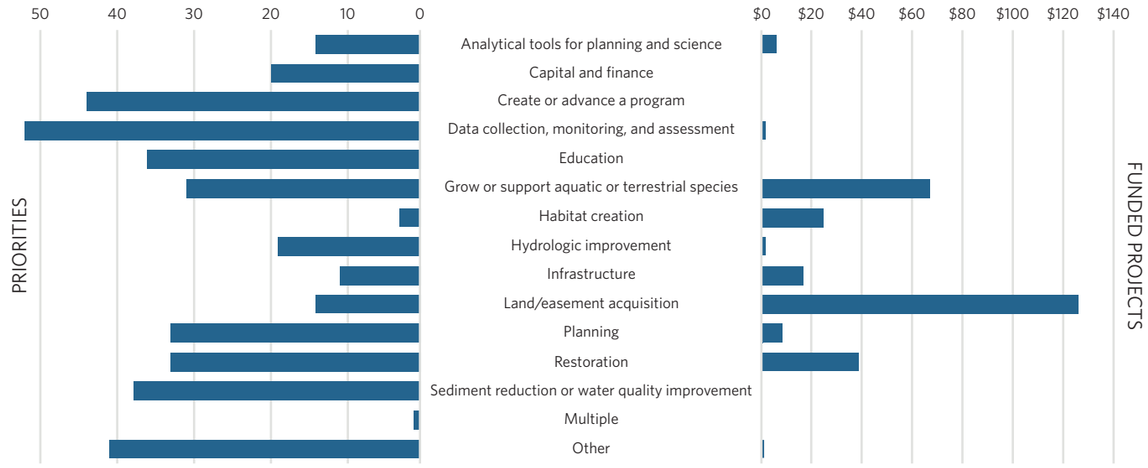

COMPARISON OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES VERSUS ACTUAL SPENDING: LOUISIANA

- The majority of funding in Louisiana has gone to *Restoration and Conservation of Habitat* (primarily barrier islands and beaches).
- Funding to date has generally been consistent with the priorities established in the Master Plan.
- To date, Louisiana has received 62% of Gulf funding.

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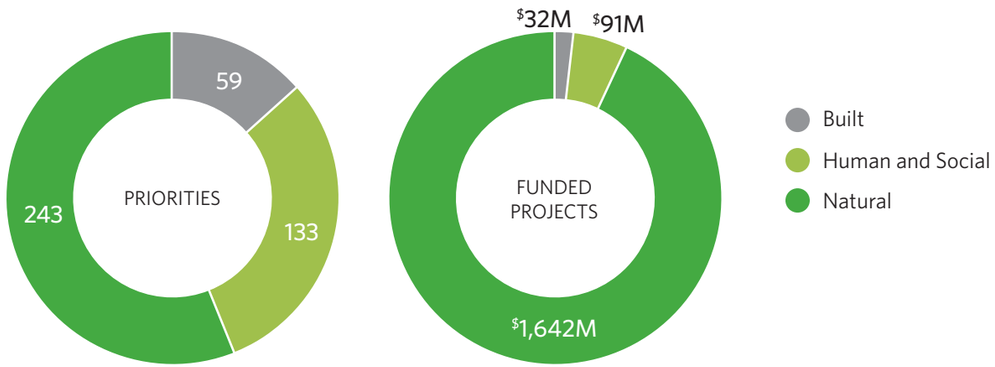

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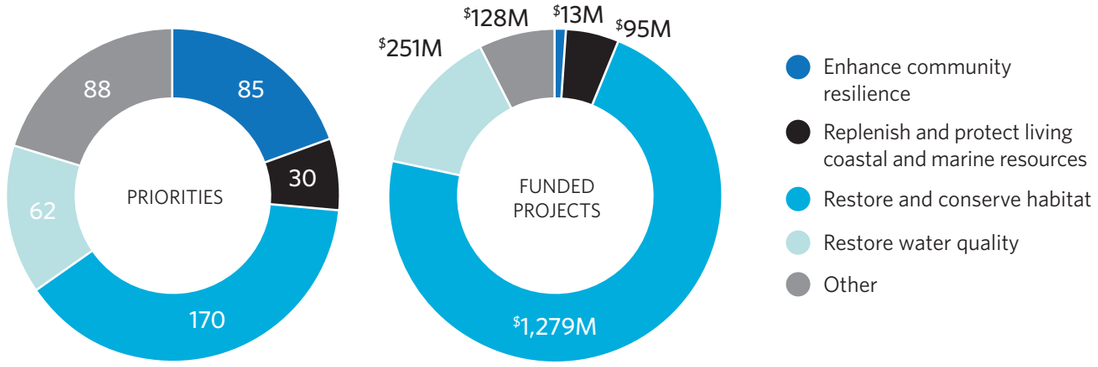

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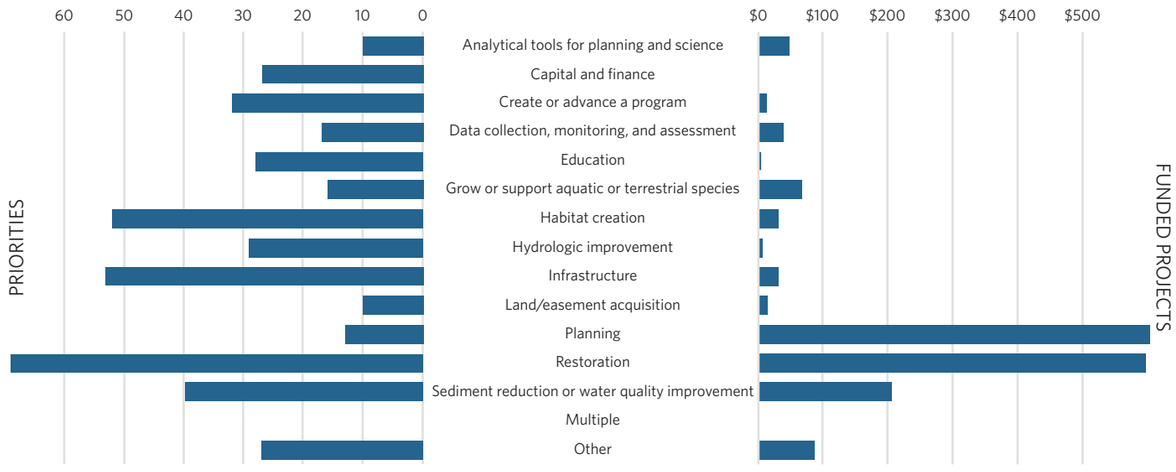

COMPARISON OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES VERSUS ACTUAL SPENDING: MISSISSIPPI

- *Restore and Conserve Habitat* and *Enhance Community Resilience* were the most identified goals in the assessed plans.
- Planning efforts in Mississippi have advanced since the previous edition of this report which has led to more decisive priorities for Mississippi as well as planning tools such as the Mississippi Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration Tool (MCERT).
- To date, Mississippi has received 18% of Gulf funding.

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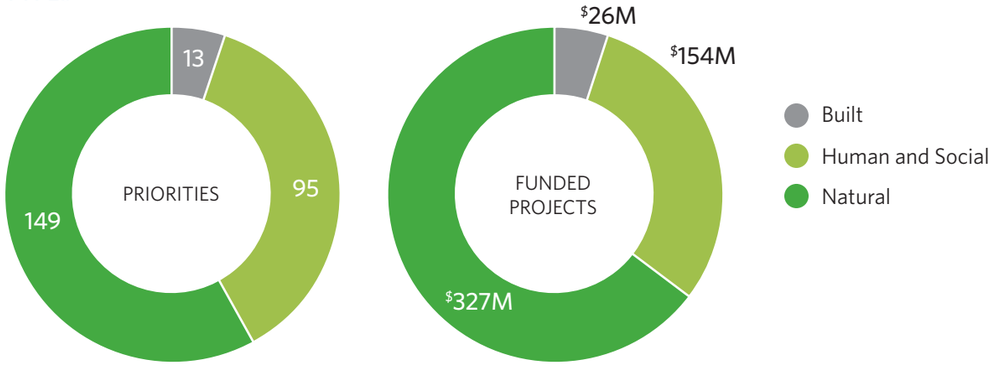

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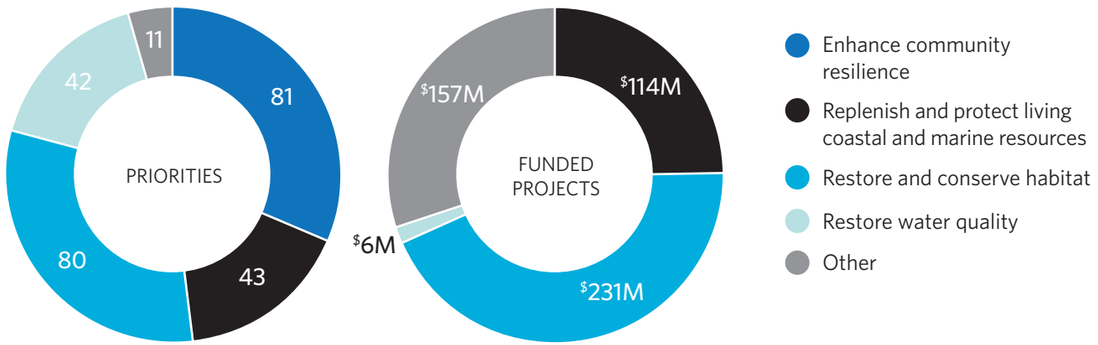

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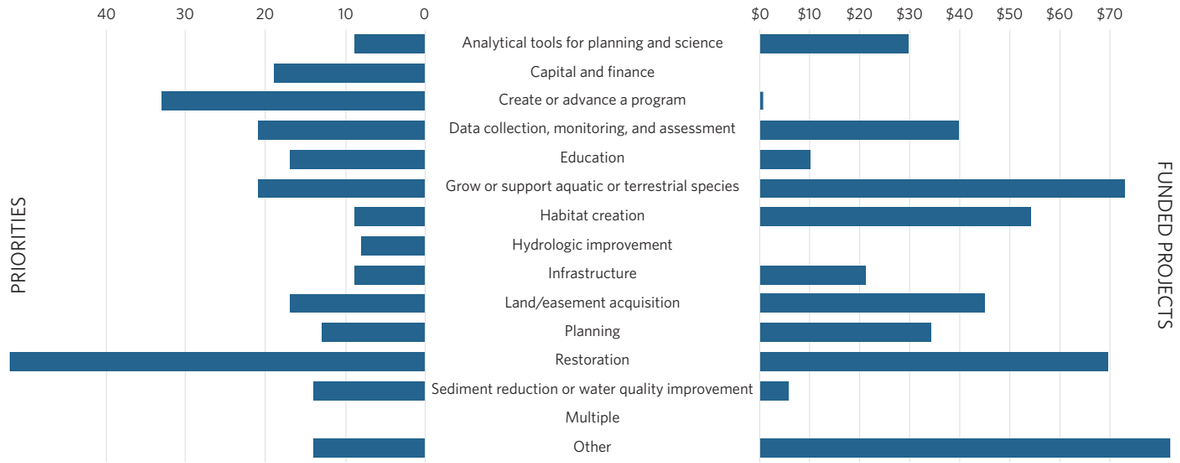

COMPARISON OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES VERSUS ACTUAL SPENDING: ALABAMA

- *Enhance Community Resilience* was the most identified goal in the assessed plans and yet was the least funded project goal, however many projects, such as coastal land acquisition, have significant secondary resilience benefits.
- *Land acquisition* and *Grow or support aquatic and terrestrial species* were the two top funded actions.
- To date, Alabama has received 13% of Gulf funding.

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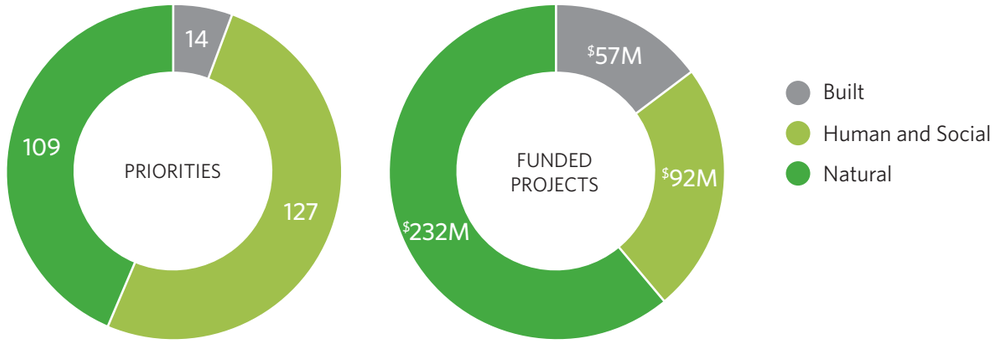

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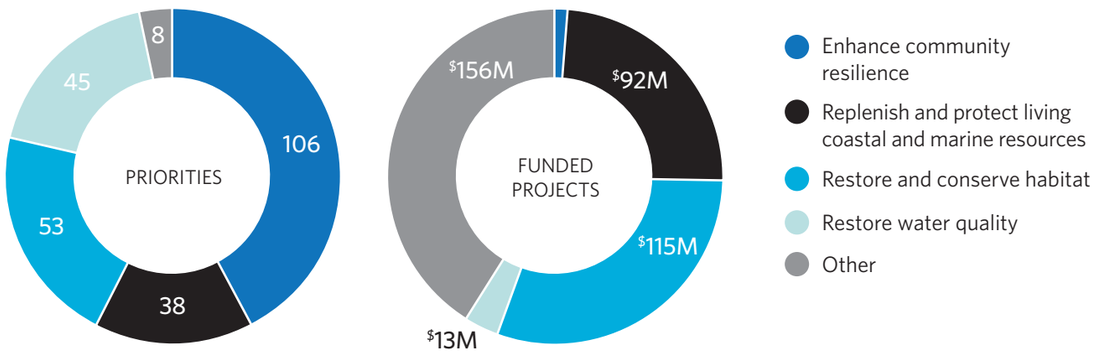

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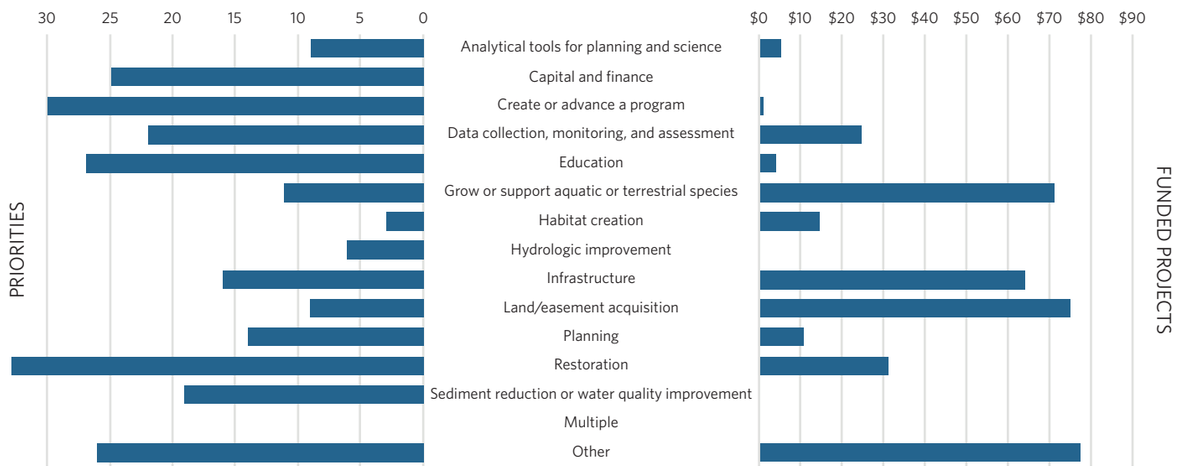

COMPARISON OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES VERSUS ACTUAL SPENDING: FLORIDA

- Projects with a goal of *Replenish and Protect Living Marine Resources* have received the most funding.
- Sediment reduction or water quality improvement was the top priority action identified in plans but has received limited finding to date.
- *Grow or support aquatic or terrestrial species* was identified as a mid-level priority and has received the majority of the funding.
- To date, Florida has received 16% of Gulf funding.

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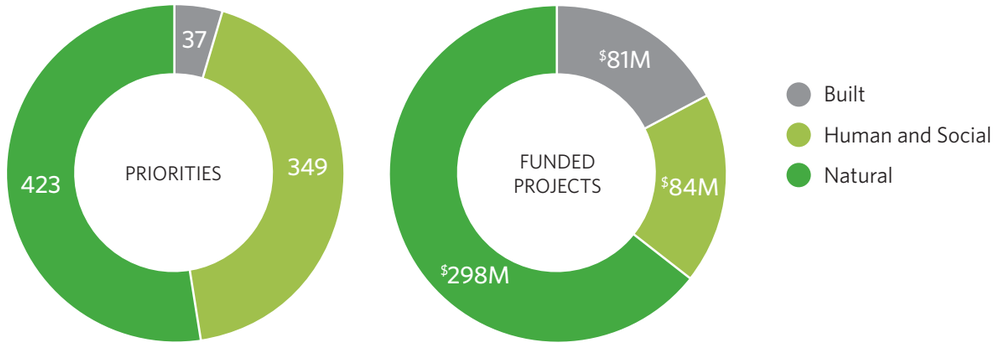

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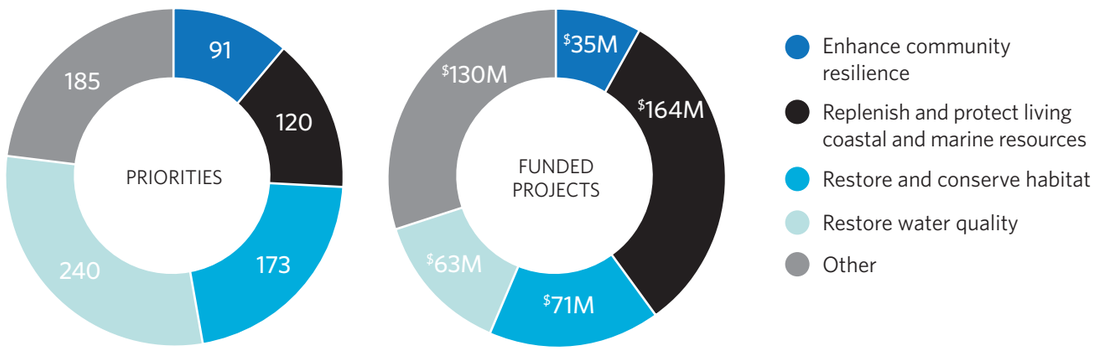

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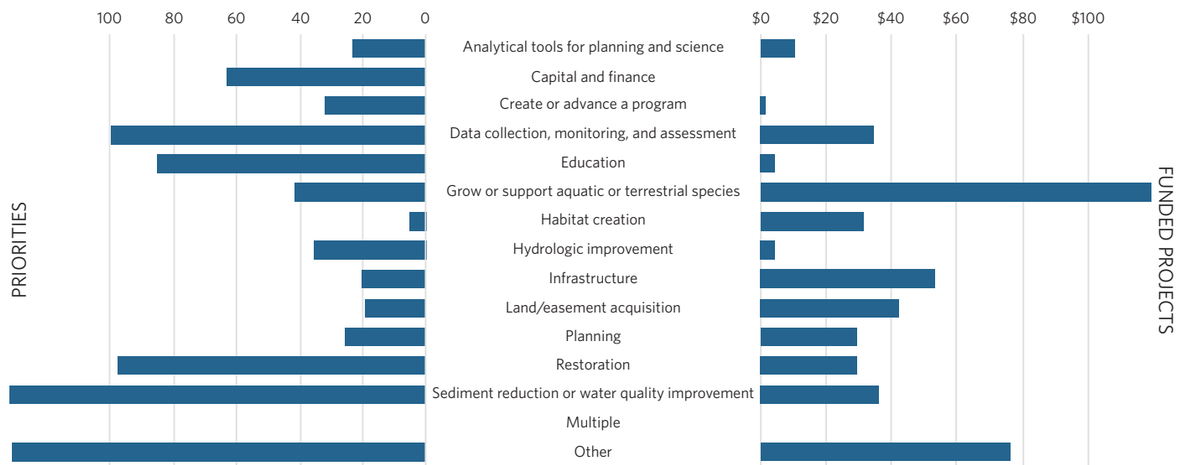


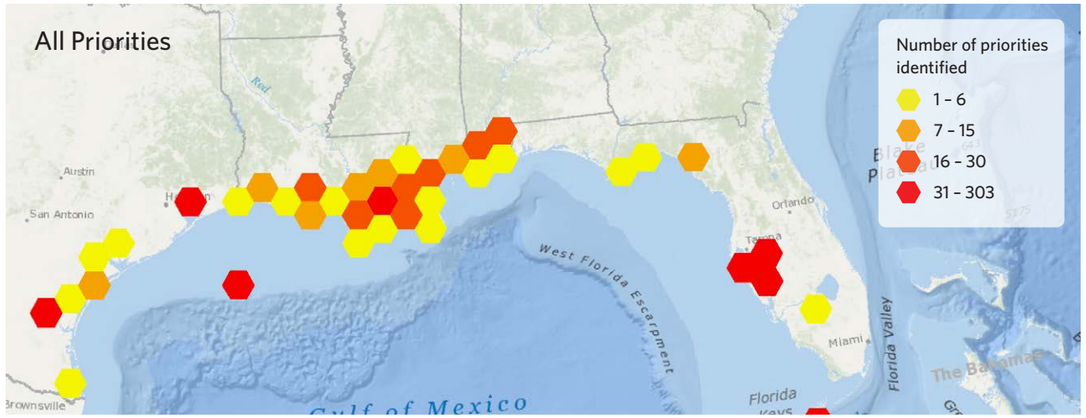
Conclusion

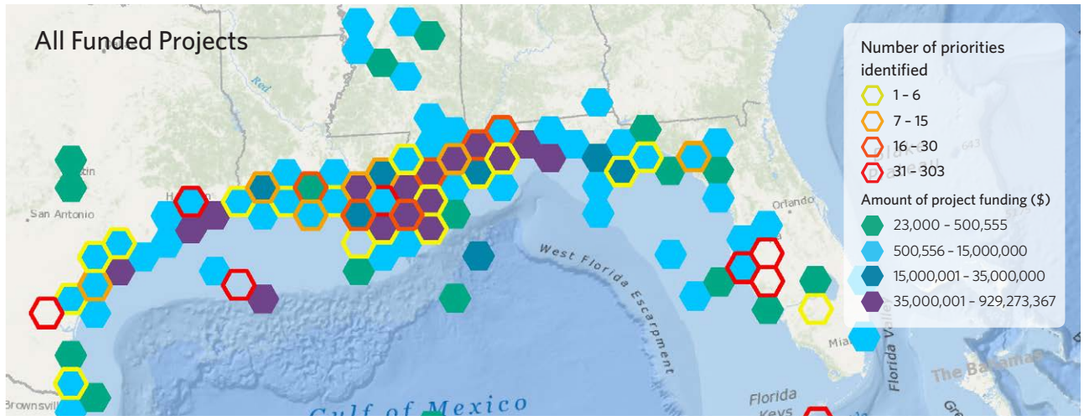
This document is based on the premise that existing and past studies and plans for restoration of the Gulf of Mexico can and should contribute to and inform current and future planning and can help to guide restoration investment in the Gulf. Many past plans have incorporated extensive scientific and public input in their conclusions, making them particularly valuable in drafting new plans, strategies, and proposals for the investment of Deepwater Horizon–related funds. The information presented in this assessment is an updated view of how funds deriving from the oil spill are being spent in comparison to the priorities set out in current and past plans. It reveals that many expenditure decisions reflect plan priorities.

While there are some significant differences between plan priorities and expenditures to date, it is still early in the process and, these differences could have a number of explanations, including the statutory or legal restrictions on the early spending from Deepwater Horizon sources and the funding allocation requirements of those sources. As additional Deepwater Horizon-related funding become available, we expect the balance of funding to more closely resemble plan priorities. Deepwater Horizon funding is also supporting a large amount of additional planning and goal setting in the Gulf region, and these new plans, most of which take into account previous planning, may modify the priorities and goals of previous plans.

We believe, however, that the information included in this study, when combined with the databases of funded projects being maintained by the Environmental Law Institute and the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, can be a useful ongoing tool for identifying similarities and differences in the allocation of restoration funds in the Gulf from the goals set out by government officials, citizens, and scientists in the many past Gulf planning efforts. Continuing review of these funding allocations will be useful to NFWF, the RESTORE Council and its members, and state and county governments in ensuring that the overall funding of Gulf projects reflects priorities set over many years for restoring the health of the Gulf and the well-being of its diverse communities.

Restoration of the Gulf of Mexico will extend well beyond the expenditure of Deepwater Horizon–related funds. Current planning and restoration project selection should both provide short-term benefits to the Gulf and establish a firm foundation for future restoration. In the long run, the Gulf of Mexico can best be restored through a continuum of effort that takes into account the good ideas and good science of the past and adapts them to the demands of new information and feedback from experience on the ground.





About the Authors

DR. CHRISTINE SHEPARD

Director of Science, Gulf of Mexico Program
The Nature Conservancy

Christine Shepard, Ph.D., is Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy's Gulf of Mexico Program. Christine's primary research focuses on assessing coastal hazards risk, quantifying the role coastal habitats play in reducing risk, and identifying where ecosystem-based approaches such as conservation or restoration are likely to be effective for risk reduction. In addition, Christine works to develop innovative spatial analyses and community engagement tools to help decision makers address coastal risks from climate change and coastal hazards like storms and sea-level rise. She co-authored the 2012 World Risk Report in partnership with United Nations University and was a member of the Department of Interior's Strategic Science Working Group "Operational Group Sandy" deployed to assist the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force.

Christine completed her Ph.D. in Ocean Science at the University of California-Santa Cruz in 2010 and her B.S. in Zoology and Psychology at the University of Florida in 2002.

JOEY JAMES

Project Scientist, Downstream Strategies

Joey James is a multi–disciplinary researcher specializing in sustainable economic development and planning in the restoration economy. He has professional experience in the public, non–profit, and private sectors and has worked extensively in environmental policy analyses, geographic information system development, economic modeling, environmental data analysis, and environmental outreach.

EVAN FEDORKO

Project Geographer, Downstream Strategies

Evan Fedorko is an experienced multi-disciplinary scientist, researcher, and GIS analyst. He has an extensive background in GIS software and technology and has applied those and other geographic principles to areas of health and epidemiology, environmental impact assessment, public safety, evacuation management, natural resources, economic development, geology, tourism, environment, recreation, public policy, logistics and E-government.

ROBERT BENDICK

Director, Gulf of Mexico Program
The Nature Conservancy

In September, 2013, Bob Bendick became Director of The Nature Conservancy's Gulf of Mexico Program. Prior to this, Bob was the Conservancy's Director of U.S. Government Relations at the World Office in Arlington, Virginia. In this position he supervised the Conservancy's relationships with Congress and the Obama Administration over a wide range of policy activities.

Before coming to Washington, D.C., Bob was Vice-President and Managing Director of the ten-state Southern U.S. Region of the Conservancy. The Southern Region included four of the five Gulf of Mexico states.

He has been with The Nature Conservancy since 1995, first as Florida Chapter Director and, then, also in the dual role as Florida Director and as director of previous southeastern U.S. groups of state chapters.

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DAVID TIPLING
The Nature Conservancy
Gulf of Mexico
nature.org/gulf
Downstream Strategies